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BOOKS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

A History of Travel in America. By SEYMOUR DUNBAR. In four volumes. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1915. Pp. li, 339; 341-740; 741-1124; 1125-1529.)

It is a well-established tradition that the eight large volumes of Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America* were projected in order to provide a medium for publishing the editor's valuable but dry and voluminous bibliographical notes. It is a reasonably safe guess that the four volumes of Dunbar's *History of Travel* were published primarily to furnish a setting for the four hundred illustrations that adorn their pages. In fact the author almost admits as much when he says in his preface that "The illustrative material, with its attendant notes, is selected and arranged to form a flowing and connected story of its own, independent of the text."

The subtitle makes the ambitious claim of "Showing the Development of Travel and Transportation from the Crude Methods of the Canoe and the Dog-Sled to the Highly Organized Railway Systems of the present, Together with a Narrative of the Human Experiences and Changing Social Conditions that Accompanied this Economic Conquest of the Continent". Although most of the subjects therein referred to are taken up in the text, it would be quite misleading to imagine that we have here an adequate history of travel in America. In the first place it is really the territory of the present United States and not the whole continent that is under consideration. In the second place the narrative stops with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869, and there follows only a brief moralizing chapter of sixteen pages labelled "Summary of Present Conditions". In the third place, and most important of all, although the author has acquired a vast amount of information upon his subject, he evidently does not comprehend the development of transportation in its relation to trade and commerce. Without this one cannot write a history of travel.

Under such circumstances it is not altogether surprising to find lacking a correct sense of proportion in considering the subject as a whole. To the serious student of history, it is rather a detriment to have some 350,000 words of text spread over four royal octavo volumes. It is more objectionable to find the half of one volume (II.) together with other occasional pages and chapters, given up to the Indians. If this dealt with the relation of the Indians to travel and transportation it might be excusable, but the blocking by the Indians of the expansion of settlement furnishes the occasion for a lengthy disquisition ending in a sermon upon the treatment of the Indians by the "Caucasians". While this is an extreme case, it illustrates a serious fault in the work.

Furthermore the method of presentation is at times confusing. In one or more chapters it is chronological, then it may be by sections—

New England, South, or West—and then by topic or by method of conveyance. This results in confusion that is not only annoying but misleading. For example, long after having finished with the settlement of Kentucky and Tennessee, and having brought those sections down to at least 1795, we find on later pages, in connection with “travel by wagons”, a consideration of Braddock’s Road which was built in 1755 and was an important connecting link in one of the routes to Kentucky.

These criticisms are severe, but they are directed mainly at the work as “a history of travel in America”, and at the claims that are made in the subtitle. It is only fair to say that a modification of the subtitle at least is under consideration for the new edition which is in process of preparation. In the opinion of the reviewer the illustrations are the real feature of the work, and should be emphasized to the extent of calling this a “pictorial history”. They are interesting and delightful, and it is a great convenience to have in one set of volumes a series of pictures illustrating the whole course of the development of travel in the United States. Many of these pictures are also valuable because of their rarity.

Owing to the character of the paper used, some of the illustrations are not so clearly reproduced as might be desired; the author is at fault in many cases in not giving sufficiently accurate descriptions of the illustrations and stating more definitely whence they have been derived; and too many of the illustrations of early travel have been taken from later prints, as in the case of the *Clermont’s* first trip on the Hudson in 1807 (II. 344–345), where a print of 1856 is used and reference made to the first steamship crossing the Atlantic. But when these criticisms are made and these limitations appreciated, the rest is pure enjoyment.

There are many good things to be found in the text from so much of the author’s storehouse of information as he has placed at the reader’s disposal, although the thread of connection is sometimes so slender as to be barely visible. If one goes through these volumes looking at the illustrations and incidentally reading the text, he is much more likely to pick up some of these choice bits of history than if he attempts to treat the work seriously as a history of travel. In the latter case he is in danger of losing his patience.

In other words, there is much that is well worth while in these volumes. They ought to be taken into consideration by every student of American history. But each student will have to pick out what he needs for himself. The index will not help him, for most of it is impossible of use by any one save the author.

MAX FARRAND.